

## **Oral History Program: Biographical Notes**

**Dr James Richard Vickery (1902 - 1997)**

### **Food Technologist**

- Birth & Family:** Born 1902, Ballarat Victoria.  
Married Marion Cochrane in Melbourne 1932  
Four children, two sons and two daughters
- Education:** Ballarat High School
- Qualifications:** Bachelor of Science in Physiology and Chemistry, Melbourne University.  
Masters Degree in Biochemistry, Melbourne University.  
Doctorate of Philosophy, Cambridge University
- Memberships:** Honorary Life Member of AIRAH (*spell out in full*) 1967
- Awards:** OBE 1967  
James Harrison Award 1972
- Work History:** In 1926 Vickery became one of the first batch of CSIR scholarship holders to go abroad for training. He already held an Exhibition of 1851 Scholarship and went to Cambridge to complete a Ph.D. degree.
- From 1926 to 1929 were spent at Cambridge working on deterioration of fatty foods and the handling and freezing of meat. In 1929 to 1931 working for the British Government, he travelled by ship from Britain to New Zealand and back to report on conditions and how meat was handled.
- Meat was traditionally transported frozen and in 1931 Dr Vickery was in charge of setting up a meat research laboratory in Brisbane for CSIR to find other ways to export meat to increase prices. He adopted the idea of chilling meat, carrying it in sealed compartments filled with carbon dioxide which acted as a preservative. This doubled the prices for the meat transported to the United Kingdom. (*Ambiguous – did it double the cost or double the income – increase its value?*)
- Dr Vickery was transferred to Sydney in 1938 to work at the CSIRO's central food research laboratories at Homebush.
- When war broke out Dr Vickery travelled to the USA to work with the army developing techniques of transporting meat to the troops.
- After the war Dr Vickery tried a new technique in which de-boned meat was packed in cartons enclosed in plastic covers and shipped, a technique which is still being used.
- In 1941 Dr Vickery became Chief of the Division of Food Preservation and Transport section. Achievements include work on chilled beef and fish and research was also conducted on the transportation of eggs. Dr

Vickery also worked on the problem of deterioration in prawns known as 'blackhead' and also conducted research on the transportation of fruit.

In 1958 Dr Vickery was seconded to the British Government for nine months to advise on the establishment of a meat research institute near Bristol.

During his time with the CSIRO Dr Vickery published several papers in the Refrigeration Journal and also had papers published by the Commonwealth Cold Storage Association.

Dr Vickery remained in his position with the CSIRO until his retirement., Prior to his retirement in 1967 he was appointed the Foundation President of the Institute of Food Science and Technology.

He was awarded an OBE in 1967 for his outstanding achievements in Applied Science.

In 1990 Dr Vickery published a book in conjunction with the CSIRO on Food Science and Technology in Australia.

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Prepared by Tricia Willis, May 2006 from oral history interview conducted on 30.10.1995.